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THE FOLDS OF WAR:
BLAKE'S MEANING OF WARFARE
AND WARFARE OF MEANING

by

GEORGE M. LUKER, Capt, USAF

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Maryland in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
1988

Advisory Committee:

Professor John Howard
Professor Leopold Damrosch, Jr.
Associate Professor Theresa Coletti

TO

William Blake,

Whose words continue
"piercing the souls of warlike men,
who rise in silent night."

AND

John Howard,

A General on the literary field who knew from the beginning
that Captains should err by their own hands.

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: The Folds of War:

Blake's Meaning of Warfare and Warfare of Meaning

George M. Luker, Master of Arts, 1988

Thesis directed by: John Howard
Director, Graduate Studies
Department of English

This thesis will attempt to elucidate the diverse levels of meaning involved in gaining a full understanding of William Blake's perspectives on warfare. In doing so, the discussion will intend to resolve a fundamental paradox apparent in Blake's mythology: that Blake's poems seem to simultaneously suggest that violent warfare was an acceptable means for revolution, but bloodshed was unacceptable; and that rationalist institutions should be overthrown in favor of artistic imagination, but armed conflict should not facilitate this action. By examining Blake's primary texts--from his early works to the later complex mythologies--along with a variety of Blake scholarship and criticism, this essay will trace the development of Blake's thought and, principally using Blake's idea of a threefold division of existence, discriminate between the three general kinds of meaning he used for war: the corporeal, the mental, and the spiritual. These discriminations will thereby help sort out the apparent paradoxical nature of his use of war.

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ABBREVIATIONS

I. One edition was used as the primary source for Blake's works and will be designated throughout as "E":

Blake, William. The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake. Ed. David V. Erdman. Commentary by Harold Bloom. Newly rev. ed. Garden City, NY: Anchor-Doubleday, 1982.

II. Blake's works frequently referenced:

A America: A Prophecy

E Europe: A Prophecy

FZ The Four Zoas, or Vala

J Jerusalem

M Milton

MHH The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

I. Introduction

This is no gentle sleep
This is no warbling dove nor shadow of a
Myrtle tree

But blood & wounds & dismal cries and clankings
of war

And hearts laid open to the light by the broad
solar sword

And bowels bitten at hammer steel, tipped forth
upon the ground of this world, here

Whenever William Blake spoke of war, he indeed meant business. The time in which he lived, 1757-1827, was, as many Blake scholars have shown, a period of political and economic upheaval. Politically, the wars with America and France exacted a heavy toll on the English during what seemed to them to be a perpetual period of warfare: bloodshed, death, and destruction were all too frequent occurrences. Meanwhile, economically, England's and Europe's industrial base expanded--it underwent a revolution in its own right--while adding even greater effectiveness to Britain's war machine. Needless to say, warfaring and industrialization had a profound effect on

Blake and his England. And to be sure, Blake's poetry is a forceful reflection of this turbulent period.

Nevertheless, in spite of the strong attitudes found in his work, clear definitions of Blake's impressions of war become elusive. That is, his perspectives on warfare are difficult to limit with any degree of certainty. We know, for instance, from "London" Blake feels pity for the "hapless Soldier" whose "sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls" (11-12, E27); and in Jerusalem we also are made aware of his horror when we read:

Hark! hear the Giants of Albion
cry at night
We smell the blood of the English! we
delight in their blood on our Altars!
(38:47-8, E185)

But what is Blake getting at in Milton when he says "This Winepress is call'd War on Earth"? (27:8, E124). After we learn to interpret the symbology, can we construct a somewhat consistent Blakean feeling toward war? Furthermore, how does the ironic "blood-on-our-Altars" attitude toward war's destructiveness exactly square with these famous opening lyrics from Milton?

I will not cease with Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,

In Englands green & pleasant land.

(1:13-16, E95-6)

A partial answer to Blake's elusiveness may first be found in his use of language. There are times when his ideas and imagery lend themselves to literal translations and quickly his meanings become clear. But quite often his meanings are hidden in what John Howard calls "clustered heaps" of irony, symbology, and allegory (Blake's World, 93) that can reveal conflicting or even contradictory readings. Also, even when one finally embraces himself of the "right" reading, Blake's attitudes or war never seem to remain static between works or, for that matter, within the same work. After many readings we may come to ask "Is Blake a pacifist?", or "Does he not think war is necessary?", or, ultimately, "What exactly does war mean to him?"

Another part of the problem of getting at Blake's feelings toward war is mostly a problem with the reader, not the writer. Blake was not satisfied using conventional language that yielded quick, static insights; he sought out language that was loaded, at times perhaps over-loaded, with meaning. In having done so, he often defies the reader to find a straightforward belief about anything, including war, especially war. As Leopold Damrosch keenly affirms, Blake's "poetic whole is made up

of interpenetrating symbolic facets that can be juxtaposed with each other in an almost infinite variety of ways; the poems are kaleidoscopes" (350). Consequently, the reader almost from the outset must understand Blake's daring and defiance, and then have the patience and willingness to work with his myriad of attitudes, consistent or not.

Yet, despite a trained reader's fortitude, Blake grinningly presents a complicated paradox. At one moment we indeed may view him as violent revolutionary. His America, for example, celebrates the efforts to throw off England's tyranny by the use of force. In this short prophetic poem, Blake's embodiment of energy, Orc, commands America's colonies to arms: "Sound! Sound! my loud war-trumpets & alarm my Thirteen Angels!" (9:1, E54). And though unfinished, The French Revolution promises to champion the downtrodden. But in another context, "The Grey Monk" for instance, we catch a glimpse of his pacifism: "But vain the Sword & vain the Bow, / They never can work War's overthrow" (25-6, E489). Here, mortal combat is a negative aspect of society, frequently a "pestilence." Even beyond these two stances, we can find warfare operating in yet another way, a way that knows no national boundaries or political ideology. In this case, Blake's warfare is conducted in timeless, mythical battlegrounds where the wars are waged between

"Eternal" characters. This warfare becomes "standard procedure," performing many of the important functions of the mythological universe which Blake himself creates. In this mode, in fact, Blake's idea of warfare eventually becomes so pervasive that one could argue that without it his mythology would not even exist. Blake's views on war, then, are not as simple as one might believe, given the historical milieu.

Considering his poetry in the aggregate, illuminated or not, we are forced to conclude that Blake's perspectives on warfare are indeed paradoxical. What is more, the tenets that comprise the paradox oppose each other from at least three angles: first, Blake is a revolutionary who endorses armed conflict; second, he is a pacifist who believes war serves no useful purpose; and finally, he is a poet-creator of a complex mythology which is predicated on a warfaring existence. Certainly, these three Blakean attitudes are not absolutely exclusive of each other. But on the other hand, neither do they fit quietly into a reader's normal expectations.

Blake scholars, to be sure, have wisely seen through some of the apparent contrarieties, noting, as David Erdman has, the clearly ironic overtones that attend war in Blake's work (72-74ff). Others, like Morton Paley, attribute many of the inconsistencies in Blake's

attitudes, including warfare, to the development of his thought--so that the early Blake is found to be much different than the later Blake (103-21). Still others, like pioneer Blake scholar S. Foster Damon, have demonstrated a flexibility in Blake's warfare symbology, identifying some of the levels and the various characters to which Blake assigns war (441-2, 378-9, 124).

However, after reconsidering Blake's work in light of its previous criticism, I believe that commentary about his views on warfare could stand refinement. If we examine these different and often apparently anomalous views on warfare, according to Blake's discrimination of the universe on three levels of existence, we may then see these levels begin to resolve the seeming contradictions.

But perhaps a better word for level is "fold," since as Nelson Hilton points out, "Blake's word for level is 'fold'" (184). This is what Blake means when he says, "Every one is threefold in Head and Heart and Reins" (M 5:6, E98), or "The sexual is Threefold: the Human is Fourfold" (4:5, E97, my underscoring). Moreover, "folds" is appropriate because not only does it imply levels, a concept found useful in most literary explication, but it connotes levels continuously joined like a sheet of fabric that doubles back on itself (Hilton 185). Blake himself was fond of artistic images, engraved or conceptual, that

involved folds--the coils of the serpent, the spires of flames, the ornamental loops of his letters--all, of course, complementing the remarkable image of the vortex. Moreover, how often does it seem that Blake's poetry doubles back on itself--between his earlier and later prophetic works, or between the same "kinds" of works, or even between the facing pages of a single work? Consequently, Blake's conception of war operates on levels that double back on themselves and, what is more, these folds come doubling back in three layers. More exactly, Blake's textual references to war, literally or figuratively, operate on three separate, yet related, levels of meaning.

The first level may be thought of as the fold of corporeal war, the bodily fold of conflict which exists on the level of the "material world." Blake well knew that for human forms this level was an indispensable, though tainted and delusive fold of existence. Yet, it was this level that Blake was wont to speak about, in both the simple literal mode and the complex allegorical mode. By this I mean that in one textual setting Blake can, and does, treat corporeal war with literal, concrete description; but elsewhere he moves into the allegorical mode where his language provides literal description of a

material universe operating within the grand scheme of a complex mythology.

Blake, to be certain, considered this corporeal fold as the lowliest level of existence, one which humanity must relentlessly strive to shake off. And through the process of losing the corporeal self, the individual would thereby progress into the next stratum of being--a higher level of perpetual human warfare--the fold of mental war.

The fold of mental warfare, which Blake chose to call in Milton the "Mental Fight" (1:13, E95), is perhaps the most intriguing level of struggle that Blake communicates. It is, in one sense, the psychology of man which he addresses here. Blake was keenly aware of the psychic forces that reside and do battle in the arena of the mind we call the unconscious. Especially noteworthy is his insight into the psycho-sexual conflicts which can result in physically harmful behavior. By today's standards Blake's behavioral observations may not appear revelatory, but then again, if we recognize that the terminology did not yet exist to explain psychological phenomena--Freud's pervasive influence would not be felt until the twentieth century--we have to be impressed; with little "formal" training, Blake ingeniously developed a system to describe the mental processes that affect human behavior. This is not to say that his scheme was in any way clinical; on the

contrary, Blake created a complete artistic complex of symbols and allegory to explain the psychic forces that shape one's life. Furthermore, his mental warfare dealt with more than the unconscious. Conscious and "preconscious" mental activity were included in this fold of conflict, too. For example, Blake believed intellectual and creative processes, those greatly uncontrollable forces which are privately concealed even for the artist, came under the auspices of mental war.

But what then, is mental warfare to Blake? Interestingly enough, its essence is actually a spiritual struggle to correct human errors of vision both within one's self and within society. Mental warfare, moreover, is that level of conflict in which one finds himself pitted against his "corporeal friends" with whom he shares a common path to redemption. And only by fighting this good fight, says Blake, only by fighting on the mental level, can humankind be delivered from its distorted material unreality. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake's own declaration of independence, throws down the intellectual challenge for his readers to awaken and reconsider their spiritual condition. This work and the others that followed draw the lines over which Blake dares his serious readers to step, and step they must, into the mental fold. Then, and only then, may the "doors

of perception" have a chance to be cleansed, granting humanity infinite vision (MHH 14, E39).

One difficulty, which arises while attempting this threefold distinction, is that when one begins assigning Blake's levels of warfare to sequential folds of consciousness, the mental level of fight is barely distinguishable, if at all, from the next higher and ultimate level of conflict, the fold of spiritual war. And the reason is simple--most of the time Blake himself does not attempt to sort out these levels. He sees mental and spiritual fight as human processes struggling together toward the common goal of salvation. As Foster Damon said, "Blake's basic purpose was the discovery and recording of new truths about the human soul" (IX). This "basic purpose" allowed for little differentiation between mind and soul and, hence, we should eventually come to interpret his agenda for salvation as psycho-spiritual.

Having identified this difficulty, though, I believe a separate discussion of Blake's spiritual warfare yet warrants attention. That is to say, not only did Blake believe that man needed to follow a type of intellectual-spiritual war-path to discovery, he perceived that in so doing mankind would graduate into still another plane of warfare, greatly distanced from the purely mental fold. There the battles would only be constructive; there the

eternals would engage in life-giving wars; and there creativity and inspiration would infinitely abound. Blake's Edenic warfare, then, is itself a completed vision and deserves careful consideration in its own right. Indeed, here too he records "new truths about the human soul," leaving us with considerably new expectations about warfare in general.

Given, then, Blake's threefold perspectives on war--the corporeal, the mental, and the spiritual--the task is set: the remainder of this discussion will examine in some detail these three levels of warfare and thereby support their existence in Blake's body of work.

Within each separate fold of warfare, I will attempt to discuss Blake's attitudes in a loose chronology. And although the chronology for Blake's writings is somewhat problematic, I am confident that using only a general time line will yield a better sense of the evolution of Blake's ideas about war. Needless to say, his development should not be seen as an endless series of drastic changes; it was a steady process of expansion. Earlier than his Songs of Innocence (ca. 1789), one can sense a very mature and rebellious set of spiritual and psychological beliefs which, in fact, carry through his final major epic, Jerusalem. As we shall see, Blake's symbols do become allegory, an ever-expanding allegory

that develops into a complicated, dynamic mythology that more completely accomodates his complex mystical vision.

By attending, above all, to the levels of Blake's war, we may eventually resolve the apparent paradox which Blake places before us. Namely, can Blake be both a pacifist and a revolutionary? Is bloodshed to Blake justified for a worthy cause, or is the cost of blood always too high? Does his symbolism of warfare effectively represent both positions? By the end of this discourse, then, by exploring these dilemmas and other aspects of Blake's folds of war, at very least we will not only be able to recognize his meanings of warfare but, in fact, we will come to better understand that within his works rages a warfare of meanings.

II. Corporeal War

Is not the wound of the sword Sweet & the broken
bone delightful[?]

Wilt thou now smile among the slain when the
wounded groan in the field[?]

(FZ VIIb:189-90, E365)

. . . in Jealousy & blood my children are led to
Urizens war (VIIb:251, E366)

The first and by far the simplest fold in which to discuss Blake's warfare is, in his own words, the "Corporeal" (M 1, 95). Corporeal war, to Blake, meant mortal combat--flesh against flesh, steel against steel, and steel against flesh--earthly armed conflict of which the reader today is still constantly made aware. The verses in the first epigraph above are ironic in their original context, but they are also effective examples of how Blake addresses his work to the bodily level. To a considerable degree throughout his poetry, he vigorously details the cruel concretions of corporeal war. He did so in the early works and continued to do so into the late major prophecies.

Primarily, corporeal warfare means, to Blake, physical armed conflict waged upon the lowest fold of existence, the material universe. It is warfare experienced by man's five mortal, finite senses. It leads to brutality, bloodshed, death, and physical destruction. It is battle initiated by kings and the incumbent political machinery, orchestrated by generals and their planning staffs, but fought by the common soldier and seaman who ultimately do the physical sacrificing and the dying. And although the foot soldier is himself cannon fodder, he plays no small role in victimizing those less fortunate--the non-combatants--who in Blake's era were those men opposed to or uninvolved with war and, of course, the innocent women and children. Morton Paley said it well: "Corporeal War is to Blake a perversion" (196).

Additionally, as J. Middleton Murry rightly explains, Blake's definition of corporeal warfare is expanded to include not only the struggles between armed powers, but the

War that is the condition of men's
daily lives, where . . . every man's
hand is against every man. The
condition of "Corporeal war" is not
manifest in the conflict of armies

alone. The armed conflict of nations
is merely for Blake the expression in
individual nations of the condition
that obtains between individual men.

(316)

And appropriately enough, to illustrate the individual
sort of corporeal war, all we need do is briefly observe
Blake's own personal "wars." For when we do, we find that
he was not wanting for corporeal causes of conflict during
his lifetime.

To name just a few, there were Hayley, Cromek, and
Scolfield. Hayley infringed on his art; Cromek defrauded
him and his art; but while corporeal distractions, for
Blake they more likely represented mental or spiritual
threats. Scolfield, on the other hand, was perhaps his
worst corporeal adversary, accusing Blake of treason,
perjuring himself in the process by attempting vengeance
upon the man who "turned him out of [his] garden"
(Bentley 122-135, Ltr to Butts E732). The act of
physically escorting Scolfield out of his garden was, for
Blake, corporeal warfare that was all too real. And as
fitting, Blake would later utilize the soldier Scolfield
as an embodiment for all that is wrong with corporeal war,
its perversions and attendant horrors.

While the Scolfield incident occurred when Blake was in his mid-forties, it is still no surprise that Blake was aware of the mortal horrors of warfare at an early age. We clearly detect his sensitivity to them even in the Poetical Sketches, dated "1783," which Blake wrote between the ages of 12 and 20. "Gwin, King of Norway" is full of physical battle scenes, written not in spite of his aversions to war, but because of them. Here are a few:

And now the raging armies rush'd,
Like warring mighty seas;
The Heav'ns are shook with roaring war,
The dust ascends the skies!

Earth smokes with blood, and groans, and shakes,
To drink her childrens' gore,
A sea of blood; nor can the eye
See to the trembling shore!

. . . .

The stench of blood makes sick the heav'ns;
Ghosts glut the throat of hell!

O what have Kings to answer for,
Before that awful throne!
When thousand deaths for vengeance cry,

And ghosts accusing groan!

(69-76, 95-100, E419-20)

Even as a young man, then, Blake was awake to the physical realities of war and possessed the ability to utilize their shock value. He created lyrics which conveyed grotesque images intentionally designed to replicate the horrors of warfare. Corporeal war is horrible, says Blake: it is a raging, rushing, roaring, smoking, bleeding, stinking, shaking, and trembling field of death. Heaven and hell, of course, are affected and kings have much "to answer for, / Before that awful throne!" Gwin himself consequently pays the ultimate corporeal price as Gordred divides Gwin's head "from the brow unto the breast" (107-8, E420). To Blake, corporeal war did indeed have far-reaching self-destructive effects.

The unfinished "King Edward the Third" looks negatively at corporeal war as well, but in this work, which has to be read as satirical drama, Blake chooses irony rather than grotesque imagery as his weapon against glorious warfare. Edward III, the actual English monarch during the fourteenth century, was tyrannical--as Blake was surely aware (Erdman 63-74). Edward had sent many thousands of English to their deaths for the conquest of France. But by deliberately reversing Edward's historical reputation, by glorifying Edward's campaigns in dramatic

format, he thereby created a satire. Evidence of Blake's ironic intent can be found in the text as well. For instance, King Edward's perversion comes through clearly in lines such as:

when English courage fails,
Down goes our right to France. (3:71-2, E429, my
underscore)

When confusion rages, when the field is in a
flame,
When the cries of blood runs up and down ranks,
Let Liberty, the charter'd right of Englishmen,
Won by our fathers in many a glorious field,
Enerve my soldiers. (1:6-9, E424, my underscore)

The rights that Edward claims here, we initially may assume, are divinely bestowed on him. But as the drama proceeds, Blake makes us ask if Edward does in fact have the God-given right to invade France. Also, it seems that having rights is a relative concept; whereas the king possesses undisputed rights, the common Englishman has only chartered rights, only those rights allowed by institutional laws. The characters Dagworth and William comment in Scene 4:

Dagw. . . . Ambition is the desire or passion
that one man

Has to get before another, in any pursuit after
glory.

. . .

Will. Then, sir, I should be glad to know if
it was not ambition that brought over our
King to France to fight for his right?

Dagw. . . . I will tell you that it was
ambition. (14-24, E434, my underscore)

Thus, Edward's war with France is not divinely inspired,
but fueled by personal ambition. Edward is using his
"unquestionable" God-given right as a convenient alibi to
extend his control, and, naturally, war is the glorious
means to that end. Here then, Blake's subtle irony
exposes this king and other royalty as the corrupt cause
of armed conflict.

An appropriate touch to King Edward the Third is
Blake's "A War Song To Englishmen." As a battle piece
originally planned for inclusion in this satirical drama
(E848), "War Song" undoubtedly contributes to the parodic
effect.

Prepare, Prepare, the iron helm of war,
Bring forth the lots, cast in the spacious orb;
Th'Angel of Fate turns them with mighty hands,
And casts them out upon the darkend earth!

Prepare, prepare.

Prepare your hearts for Death's cold hand!

prepare

Your souls for flight, your bodies for earth!

Prepare your arms for glorious victory!

Prepare your eyes to meet a holy God!

Prepare, prepare.

(1-10, E440)

In these two representative stanzas, instead of placing the emphasis on glory to God and country, or on defense of the homeland, or on victory over the French (the French or France is not even mentioned), "War Song" overwhelmingly places the attention on morbid and confused images of death. Despite its form--the exclamatory punctuation and visual resemblance to a hearty battle-cry--the song's lyrics are actually better suited as a morbid dirge, suggesting little can be gained from physical warfare; that warriors should ready themselves for "Death's cold hand," their "souls for flight," and their "bodies for earth." "War Song" therefore substantiates Blake's view that corporeal warfare is a perversion and does keep with the other war-related works from Poetical Sketches: namely, Gwin and King Edward the Third (as noted); and the Prologues to King Edward the Fourth and King John, the

brief yet forthright renderings of war debased at the hands of kings.

After his initial foray into material war, Blake's next "major" works, generally including his writings from 1784-1790, however, contain notably less mention of corporeal war. These works--An Island in the Moon, the religion tracts, Tiriel, The Book of Thel, The Songs of Innocence, and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (distinct from "A Song of Liberty")--provide only fleeting moments of glorified war. For instance in the farcical An Island in the Moon, Sipsop the philosopher does sing a war ditty (16, E 465), but the overall treatment is minimal. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, sans "A Song of Liberty," does speak of the "destructive sword" (8:27, E36) and the "flaming sword" (14, E39), but does so strictly within metaphysical contexts. Also, several of the songs from Blake's Notebook certainly conjure up images of perverted war, but it would be risky to say these works fit squarely into this period.

In this period, then, Blake certainly limited his imagery of warfare, which in one sense is appropriate since the period of these works coincides with an absence of Britain's involvement in wars between the end of the American Revolution (Treaty of Paris signed in 1783) and the makings of the French Revolution (the storming of the

Bastille in 1789). Perhaps the sparsity of physical armed conflict is, in fact, due to a sort of "lull in the action."

Nevertheless, when Blake chose to append "A Song of Liberty" to Marriage, the imagery, though grounded in the immortal regions, becomes that of the battlefield. The "jealous," "starry" king has fallen with his comrades-in-arms:

15. Down rushed beating his wings in
vain the jealous king: his grey brow'd
councillors, thunderous warriors,
curl'd veterans, among helms, and
shields, and chariot horses,
elephants: banners, castles, slings
and rocks. (25:15, E44)

The starry and jealous king falls, and with him so do the ancient corrupt laws and the perverted sorts of warfare. Here, Blake had expanded his vision; and likewise, his perception of corporeal warfare had also grown. That is, material war was traced back to deeper roots: "A Song of Liberty" marked Blake's first important explanation of why war existed. It existed not only because rulers were corrupt--this was a given. War existed because humankind's rationalism falsely represented eternity. The Old Testament and traditional Christianity said that war

was due to fallen man. Blake, on the other hand, believed war was due to the Old Testament God of strict laws and rationality. In fact, as Northrop Frye tells us, Blake believed man's creation and fall were one in the same act (41). So then, without the imposition of rigid moral codes, Blake proclaimed with prophetic finality,

Empire is no more! and now the lion and wolf
shall cease. (MHH 25, E45)

Thus, Blake had found an ultimate cause of warfare-- he called it reason. In his mythology Blake created a character to represent this cause--and as he would later be known, his name was Urizen. Though still unnamed in the unfinished The French Revolution, Urizen's presence is nonetheless felt. It is the spirit of Urizen whose ". . . heavy brow'd jealousies lower o'er the Louvre . . ." (59, E288), and his

Nobles [who] have gather'd [his] starry hosts
round this rebellious city [i.e., Paris],
To rouse up the ancient forests of Europe, with
clarions of cloud breathing war;
To hear the horse neigh to the drum and trumpet,
and the trumpet and war shout reply.

(100-02, E290)

The noblemen of France are essentially Urizen's agents waging war for all the wrong reasons: fighting for

extension of power; for glory in battle; for the law-giving, cosmic judge known to them as God.

When Urizen is finally named in Visions of the Daughters of Albion, while he is not directly connected to mortal warfare, his agent of lawful morality, Bromion, does ask sarcastically, "Ah, are there other wars, beside the wars of sword and fire!" (4:19, E48). Eventually though, Urizen does appear in force, outfitted in full regalia. And in this sense, it is in America that Urizen and his armies have their warfaring "coming-out."

In America Blake presents Urizen as one who "perverted [energy] to ten commands" (8:3, E54). Urizen wrongly had attempted to restrain energy's dynamic force until Albion's Guardian, King George III, and the soldiers of law, his British soldiers, were finally repelled from America's shores. What is more, because of Urizen's tyranny, the bands of Albion would suffer greater consequences than the normal aftermath of military defeat. Because of their oppressions and of their cruelty toward the American colonies, a great pestilence would befall them:

In terror view'd the bands of Albion, and the
ancient Guardians
Fainting upon the elements, smitten with their
own plagues (16:16-17, E57)

That is, the plagues were essentially the sicknesses they had brought upon themselves for going to war in defense of a false moral code and its ratified injustices. Their "pity [had] become a trade, and generosity a science, / That men get rich by" (11:10-11, E55). But for these crimes, Albion himself would be consumed by an internal pestilence that he would no longer be able to contain.

Ultimately, what aids an understanding of Blake's attitude toward destructive warfare is the idea of pestilence incorporated here. The image of plagues is clearly Biblical, recalling either the plagues of Egypt or those of Revelation. In either case, the allusion is apocalyptic in that plagues betoken a new age. Mortal war, then, becomes for Blake a material signpost for the approaching millennium. In fact, as plate 14 shows, corporeal warfare can itself be interpreted as a plague:

Albion's Angel gave the thunderous
command:

His plagues obedient to his voice flew forth out
of their clouds
Falling upon America, as a storm to cut them off
As a blight cuts the tender corn when it begins
to appear.

. . .

And as a plague wind fill'd with insects cuts
off man and beast. . . . (A 14:4-8, E56)

But America thwarts the attack:

But all rush together in the night in wrath and
raging fire

The red fires rag'd! the plagues recoil'd! then
roll'd they back with fury

On Albions Angels. . . . (A 14:19-20/15:1, E56)

Here the plague of warfare ironically bounds back on the original carriers; yet by contrast, Blake's attitude toward warfare can now be viewed less negatively than before. Prior to Marriage and America Blake's material armed conflicts were strictly a debasement of constructive unarmed ones. And although it is true that warfare is a plague, causing grotesque suffering and painful death, once Blake generates the apocalyptic context, material warfare can then be seen as an optimistic usher for a pending ideal society. As such, this becomes the only time that Blake allows corporeal war into a favorable light.

One has to agree with Harold Bloom as he asserts that in America "Blake finds the kind of poem he is most himself in writing" (117). Blake's mythology began to take final shape during the mid-1790s, his "sublime allegory" becoming the sharpened instrument for his

expanding ideas. Thus America provided the appropriate starting point for his new poetic excursion. Likewise, Europe and The Song of Los, poems complementary to America since they work together to form Blake's four major continents, depict the destructive fold of warfare as basically negative.

In Europe, the sons of Urizen suggest they should "laugh at war" (4:7, E62), horrible plagues continue to infect Albion's bands, and, as a finale, Los calls "his sons to the strife of blood" (15:11, E66). In The Song of Los, Urizen is still branded as an ultimate cause of war, giving "his Laws to the Nations" (3:8, E67). Meanwhile, the human forms "War / Against one another," and a disgusted Blake says, "so let them war on" (3:14, E67). The belief that war is the enslavement of energy is enlarged upon here, but as stated above, Blake already suggested this in America. In The Song of Los the blood continues as well to flow "On mountain, dale and plain" (7:38-40, E69-70). With the possible exceptions of On Homers Poetry and On Virgil, little else actually sheds new light on Blake's attitudes toward earthly war. The other major works tend to operate in more elaborately-expanded allegorical modes which do, in fact, utilize corporeal war symbols. Yet, by the time he writes and engraves his "minor" prophecies, Blake's assumptions about

the corporeal have indeed solidified, making his views on mortal armed conflict consistent for the rest of his work.

That corporeal war in his remaining works draws less attention than before is understandable; Blake had become disillusioned with war as an instrument of social revolution, as Erdman thoroughly demonstrates (309-28). Nevertheless, in his minor prophecies he had established the corporeal framework from which he could wage greater battles and build higher meanings. As his poetry progressed, Blake focused less within the material fold, including its warfare, since, as Blake was certain, it was an extension of a fold of the psychological and mystical. For Blake, the debased material battlegrounds on earth became merely the residue of faulty mental and spiritual conflicts within man.

III. Mental War

I see the shower of blood: I see the
swords & spears of futurity
Tho in the Brain of Man we live, & in
his circling Nerves.
Tho' this bright world of all our joys
is in the Human Brain.
(FZ 1:292-94, E306)

Loud sounds the war song round red Orc in his
fury. (FZ VIIb:144, E 364)

In the large sense, the meaning of mental warfare for Blake is clear: mental war is man's relentless internal struggle. For us this sense of "war" is plainly metaphorical. Yet, for Blake it clearly meant this and more. In his expanded vision, the interior battle became other than some sort of linguistic proving-ground that results in an art form. For him mental conflict was truly a matter of life and death. That is to say, Blake believed erroneous thinking and false mental combat had persisted for centuries with ugly, damaging consequences. Repression, poverty, cruelty and, for that matter, armed conflict were the results of flawed mental processes. To

complete Paley's thought, "Corporeal War is to Blake a perversion of Mental War" (196).

Moreover, though the human mind for Blake was defective in varying degrees, he generally viewed the psyche as steeped in two kinds of error--namely, those stemming from the materialistic mechanism of the brain itself and those of hard-hearted experience. First, Blake would say that since "thinking" is controlled by a flawed material body, thinking must be imperfect as well. That is, thought regulated by the five corporeal senses and contained in a brain linked to a polypus-like nervous system is subject to gross error. Since the part of the mind that stems from material substance is "clos'd by [the] senses five" (MHH 7, E35), then it naturally follows that thought based strictly on empirical data, as Locke would have it, is itself perverted. Moreover, for Blake this kind of mental error accounts for unconscious abnormal behavior, as we shall see.

Secondly, he would say mental error is found in those who, through rigidifying experience, intentionally hold firm to reason despite emotional promptings to the contrary. Obviously, this kind of mentality differs from simple sensationalist thought because it expresses a conscious denial of desire, energy, and imagination along with a calculated privileging of a rational universe. To

Blake, this disposition was lethal. For him personally the rationalist's insistence on this kind of thinking had to be thoroughly trying since he had dedicated his life to creating a system of belief bent on deposing and counterbalancing the rational world. In Blake's eyes, a mentality that purposefully opposed imagination exuded depravity.

Thus, in one particular sense, Blake's mental warfare became a personal "Mental Fight" against sensationalist psychology and the narrow definition of experience imposed by the closed system of rationalism. In other words, he believed that England and the rest of the world lived perpetually in a precarious state because of the confused system of beliefs that humanity had imposed upon itself. Of course, he held reason personally responsible. And "reason" provided the cause against which he worked throughout most of his adult life: to expose the chaos and errors that follow from rationalism. In fact, he believed it his appointed task to oppose such a system the best way he knew, to awaken those who had been lulled into a false view of reality. For instance, in the advertisement to his Exhibition of "Painting in Fresco," Poetical and Historical Inventions, published in 1809, Blake not so modestly proclaims that

There cannot be more than two or three great Painters or Poets in any Age or country; and these, in a corrupt state of Society, are easily excluded, but not so easily obstructed . . . It is [sic] therefore become necessary that I should exhibit to the Public, in an Exhibition of my own, my Designs, Painted in Water-colours . . . If Art is the glory of a nation, if Genius and Inspiration are the great Origin and Bond of Society, the distinction my Works have obtained from those who best understand such things, calls for my exhibition as the greatest of Duties to my Country. (2, E528)

Such an immodest assertion results from his deep commitment to the mental war he fought daily against the long-standing institutions who denied "Genius and Inspiration" and affirmed the safe and traditional. Mental war became his duty, indeed his sacred duty. Naturally, his weapons for this personal crusade became the pencil, the brush, and the graver.

Though not stated in as many words, the first clear evidence of deliberate mental war comes through loud and

clear in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. It is here that his mental confrontation against the incumbent powers of reason begins to emerge. Of course in his earlier works, Blake had created certain mental tensions often found in fine literature. In particular, he had used the ironic mode: as noted earlier, his "King Edward the Third," "War Song to Englishmen," and "King John" exhibit a rebellious twist of mind. The Songs likewise operate with reversals, like those found in "Holy Thursday" (Songs of Innocence), "The Tyger," and others. But with Marriage there comes a difference.

In Marriage, Blake draws the battle lines between the warring factions that exist in man's psyche. Specifically, Blake formally declares mental war on pure reason and its resulting institutional laws. He openly defies those who believe in a rational universe and those who dare to perpetuate it. Blake is both the prophet and the "just man" who indeed "roars & shakes his fires in the burdend air" and "rages in the wilds / Where lions roam" (MHH 2:1-20, E33-4). "Good is the passive that obeys Reason," he proclaims; and "Evil is the active springing from energy" (MHH 3, E34). Then speaking through "The voice of the Devil," Blake concludes that contraries do exist, whereby

2. Energy is the only life and is from the Body
and Reason is the bound or outward circumference
of Energy.

3. Energy is Eternal Delight (MHH 4, E34)

One does not have to be a logician to grasp the implications here. Reason should not be privileged over energy, desire, and imagination. In fact, he would say a civilization immersed in reason should be overthrown and a new society built in its place. Furthermore, the new universe, Blake's universe, would allow for harmonious binary relationships: male and female, good and evil, even war and peace could exist side by side. In brief then, this is Blake's ideal--that one should first be made aware of rationalism's errors and then, having been enlightened, one must mentally oppose the institutions that fly reason's banner. Fight the good fight, says Blake. And the good fight is the mental fight.

Within the "Song of Liberty," his coda to Marriage, another important character makes his debut in Blake's mythology. Just as we are introduced to the fallen, though yet unnamed Urizen, the "jealous" and "starry" king, Blake creates another nameless figure who does exactly what Marriage's preceding rhetorical tracts proclaim needs to be done. The figure is Orc, and his

task is to oppose Urizen. And with the birth of Orc, then, we witness the advent of mental war.

If in the first line of "Liberty" we interpret the groaning of the Eternal Female as a signal to the birth of Orc, as I believe we can, the new born Orc makes quite an impact on "Earth." His mere presence causes upheaval: "Albions coast is sick silent; the American meadows faint! / Shadows of Prophecy shiver along by the lakes and rivers and mutter across the ocean!" (MHH 25:2-3, E44). Upon Orc's arrival, Blake himself commands France, Spain, and Rome to action. But the real confrontation follows.

Orc, the new born terror," howls in the Eternal Females' trembling hands, then, "on those infinite mountains," the "new born fire" stands boldly before Urizen (MHH 25:7-8, E44). In turn, Urizen responds in short order:

10. The speary hand burned aloft,
unbuckled was the shield, forth went
the hand of jealousy among the flaming
hair, and hurl'd the new born wonder
thro' the starry night. (25-26, E44)

Mental warfare has now begun; the rational God of the universe will have no part of limitless energy--its potential is too threatening--and at all costs he will attempt to expel it from his domain of containment. But

for this decision, this false God is revealed as a fallen law-giver whose futile efforts to control cannot mend his unraveling universe.

Thus Blake's myth unfolds. In Marriage reason and energy have met on a symbolic mental battlefield, and though the war has just begun, we know for certain that the universe will never be as it was. Moreover, it is actually the passionate Orc, who comes to symbolize the spirit of revolt, who initiates the mental conflict. Like a volatile chemical that is added to a stable solution, Orc has the power to create turmoil in an controlled rational environment. So then, from what Blake provides, we can conclude that just as Urizen was ultimately responsible for corporeal war, Orc must be held accountable for mental war. Without Orc, there would be no primary opposition to Urizen, and hence, there would be no progression toward a balanced state of mentality. Said simply, without Orc, there would be no mental warfare.

As Blake's mythology then proceeds, Orc continues to carry the torch of mental war. In America, perhaps the most unequivocal mythical rendering of the Orc-Urizen conflict, Orc is finally given a name and, as mentioned, he spurs the thirteen colonies to war. Here, Orc is clearly portrayed as the agitator of armed conflict. Historically, as Jacob Bronowski suggests, it might very

well be true that Thomas Paine was one of Blake's sources for Orc (79). But we must hasten to add that like Paine, the consummate rhetorician of revolution, Orc is also an activist whose actions touch others minds and not their flesh directly. Orc's war, mental war, is waged in response to Urizen's laws and the consequence, armed insurrection, is but the material reflection of their confrontation. It might be better to say, rather, that corporeal warfare attends Orc and his actions. The opening of America's "Preludium" illustrates this:

The shadowy daughter of Urthona stood before red
Orc.

. . .

His food she brought in iron baskets, his drinks
in cups of iron;

Crown'd with helmet & dark hair the nameless
female stood;

A quiver with its burning stores, a bow like
that of night,

When pestilence is shot from heaven; no other
arms she need.

. . . silent she stood as night;

For never from her iron tongue could voice or
sound arise;

But dumb till that dread day when Orc assay'd
his fierce embrace. (A 1:1-10, E51)

In this scene, whereas the shadowy female with her accoutrements is portrayed as the envoy of mortal war, Orc is a distant master. Certainly, Orc is served with "iron" baskets and cups, but it is the "iron"-tongued, shadowy female who wears helmet and quiver, prepared to shoot pestilence from heaven (Blake frequently used iron to represent earthly war). And the distinction is important: while Urizen openly and directly represents mortal war, Blake does not like to soil Orc's hands with iron battle; whereas Urizen and his agents stand for the immediate causes of grotesque physical death, Orc conversely calls his shots through man's psyche.

Blake therefore here substantiates his important claim that the chain reaction of events leading to corporeal war is initiated by Urizen. Orc, on the other hand, is only the respondent to Urizen's death hold. For example, the shadowy female, representing the material camp under Urizen's control, cannot even speak. She has been entranced and enslaved by Urizenic domination. So embrace her Orc must; and as a result of the ensuing sexual encounter, not only does she speak, she cries aloud to Orc,

I know thee, I have found thee, & I will not let
thee go;

Thou art the image of God who dwells in darkness
of Africa;

And thou art fall'n to give me life in regions
of dark death. (A 2:7-9, E52)

Then, when Albion's Angel unleashes the plagues
against America, Orc faces Urizen's forces head on. Orc
responds, first, by uniting the patriots for their common
good and, next, by rousing them to beat back the enemy:

Fury! rage! madness! in a wind swept through
America

And the red flames of Orc that folded roaring
fierce around

The angry shores, and the fierce rushing of
th'inhabitants together.

. . .

Then had America been lost, o'erwhelm'd by the
Atlantic,

And Earth had lost another portion of the
infinite,

But all rush together in the night in wrath and
raging fire

The red fires rag'd! the plagues recoil'd! then

roll'd they back with fury

On Albions Angels. (14:10-15:1, E56)

The symbology, as always, is important here. One must agree with Howard who clearly explains in his Infernal Poetics that the plagues found throughout America were Blake's symbols for the delusions with which the sick Albion had attempted to control the American colonies; and by fitting contrast, Orc's fires represented the enlightened and just wrath ignited within the minds of the Americans (124-5). To be sure, it is here in their first full-blown psychic confrontation that Orc's illumination most soundly and unambiguously defeats the deluding powers of Urizen:

Over the hills, the vales, the cities, rage the
red flames fierce;

The Heavens melted from north to south; and

Urizen who sat

Above all heavens in thunders wrap'd, emerged
his leprous head.

. . .

Weeping in dismal howling woe he dark descended
howling

Around the smitten bands, clothed in tears &
trembling shudd'ring cold. (16:1-8, E57)

In Europe, Orc likewise stands as the mental catalyst opposing the forces of Urizen. As he was in America, he again is bound; nevertheless he answers the call, his force manifesting "in the vineyards of red France" where there "appeared the light of his fury" (E 15:2, E66). Likewise, his appearance in Europe anticipates a corporeal struggle; in this case the "strife of blood" becomes a more definitive reminder of the debased by-product of intellectual war.

Orc and Urizen continue their struggle into Blake's remaining continents in The Song of Los. "Urizen [gives] his Laws to the Nations" in "Africa" causing the "brethren & sisters [to live] in War & Lust" (3:8-4:6, E67-8). But in "Asia" we find, "the darkness . . . was startled / At the thick-flaming, thought-creating fires of Orc" (6:5-6, E68). Needless to say, Urizen is again responsible for martial law while Orc incites the mind to battle Urizen's restraints.

But in Blake's "Bible of Hell"--the books of Urizen, Ahania, and Los--the Orc myth subtly begins to be modified. And what makes the shift notable is that Orc's transformation demonstrates in Blake an important change of attitude. In Urizen, Blake's Genesis, Orc is no longer privileged over Urizen; Orc cohabits the fallen world with Urizen. Following the birth of Orc in "Chap: VI," "Chap.

VII" details the chaining of Orc who awakens the dead with his voice. Yet, just before the section ends Blake modifies his myth:

9. But Los encircled Enitharmon

With fires of Prophecy

From the sight of Urizen & Orc. (20:42-4, E81)

In this image Blake has certainly reevaluated Orc's position in his mythology and in the universe. It is as if Blake has stepped back and noticed that the battle between Urizen and Orc is not one in which he should take sides. Los, the "Eternal Prophet" who becomes increasingly important to the central myth, believes that Enitharmon, his emanation, should be shielded from the eyes of both Orc and Urizen. For that matter, it now seems Los has even appropriated Orc's fires in the process of protecting her. Consequently, the pairing of Orc and Urizen seems to suggest that Blake now places both reason and passion on the same level. Fuzon, frequently considered as the surrogate Orc figure, does pick up the scepter of mental war, but briefly, in the remainder of Urizen and in The Book of Ahania. Blake then abandons him most likely because of irreconcilable problems with his character (Damon 148).

Let us now briefly examine a few of the psychological insights that Blake brings to bear within the mental war

of his major epics. Indeed, it is in these complex works, especially in The Four Zoas, that Blake solidifies his discriminations between the mental and spiritual folds of conflict. And in order to break Blake's code, as it were, we need to understand at the outset what Foster Damon learned years ago--that "none of it makes sense until we apply it to the workings of the human mind" (X).

In a word, the unengraved epic The Four Zoas, or Vala, can be read as the story of the mental warfare occurring within Albion, Blake's symbol of all mankind. Each "zoa," the singular of a Greek term Blake borrowed from the prophet Ezekiel's "four living creatures" (Bloom, E948), clearly represents the warring factions which operate in man. As Paley notes, "the reality of these four 'Zoas'. . . is explicitly psychological" (91). That is, Blake was aware that it is "in the Brain of Man we live, & [sic] in his circling Nerves" (FZ 1:293, E306), and The Four Zoas was, among many things, his attempt to illustrate the battling psychic forces within man and their futile struggles to reintegrate themselves into a balanced, unified existence. And generally speaking, Blake's characterizations of man's mental forces are fitting and the renderings of their conflicts are equally plausible.

The Zoas consist of Tharmas, who represents the senses; Urizen, reason; Luvah, passion (Orc is the fallen version); and Urthona (or Los, his fallen version), imagination. Throughout the epic they are at lethal odds with one another. For instance, in "Night the First," we find that "Luvah & Urizen contend in war around the holy tent" (FZ I:480, E311). In other words, passion and reason combat each other around man's sacred "temporary dwelling" (Damon 397), the material ideal self. In "Night the Fifth," following a retelling of Los's chaining of Orc, the effect is this:

The hammer of Urthona smote the rivets in
terror. of brass
Tenfold. the Demons [Orc's] rage flamd tenfold
forth rending
Roaring redounding. Loud Loud Louder & Louder &
fird
The darkness warring with the waves of Tharmas &
Snows of Urizen. (V:104-7, E341)

Urthona, unspoiled imagination, here violently reacts to the binding of Orc, or fallen passion, releasing him to do battle with the five senses and rationality. Finally, in "Night the Ninth," after numerous conflicts, the Zoas reunite with their Emanations and are at peace. As the epic closes, Urthona

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant Land.

(1:13-16, E95-6)

In these lines Blake is certainly not aligning himself with any sort of militarized religious crusade. He viewed the spiritual battle as being won or lost in the mind of the individual. One might say the "Sword" here becomes a metaphor for the material instrument an artist uses to incite and wage intellectual war, perhaps a pen or burin. It is the only thing left to the artist in the material fold by which he can stir the minds of the masses.

Blake's main thrust of the Sword in Milton is that the "Selfhood" of man must be annihilated in order to receive the unified vision. Here, Blake had delved even deeper for a root cause of the perverted world and uncovered the self as the culprit. With the self intact, all one can expect from life is death, said Blake. But with the self destroyed, one would experience complete consciousness. The self, of course, is responsible for the external enemies of the artist, for corporeal war--hence the phrase "warlike selfhood" (M 14:16, E108). "Selfhood" is, in fact, a better term than "self" because it means more than a vague conception of the psyche--it

better connotes a self-consciousness, a self-protectionism, and an extension of the self to its material attachments. With this kind of mental being, all that can naturally be expected are material conflicts fought to no good end. As Murry thoughtfully expressed Blake's notion of selfhood, "The life of Self-interest and the life of Imagination cannot exist together; and self-interest is War, and ends in War" (317).

In sum, as I have been hinting throughout this discussion, especially of The Four Zoas, Blake essentially came to reveal two fields of mental war. The first is the perverted mental battle fought to preserve the selfhood, a Satanic drive attempting to "prolong Corporeal War" and achieving only eternal death. With this mentality, indeed the mind leans toward the corporeal fold. The second is the intellectual fight which seeks to destroy the selfhood, but aims at gaining eternal life. In other words, this mental war is the annihilation of selfhood. But for this mode of thought, the mind shifts into the spiritual fold. This latter mental battle will be better addressed in the next chapter. The former, rightly treated here, is finely illustrated in the major epics by two of Blake's particularly ingenious symbols--namely, the wine press and the printing press.

Blake's wine press works extremely well by representing warfare in the epics. In fact, it does double-duty because, though a simple mechanism, it becomes a fundamental working-paradigm to explain the internal pressures leading man to perverted mental and corporeal warfare. That is, Blake is able to utilize the image of the wine press to fully illustrate both the fallen material and intellectual folds of war. Meanwhile, he is also able to incorporate a third dimension, the imagination, into the model. And as a result, Blake succeeds in uniting his three chief controlling forces--reason, passion, and imagination--into one effectively forceful symbol.

It is interesting to note that the wine press was one of those images important enough for Blake to incorporate into all three of his last major works. As a symbol it is meaningfully ambiguous, revealing all levels of warfare, perverted and eternal. As previously stated, he ably exploited the corporeal and mental folds of warfare through symbolic imagery. And Blake's wine press indeed fits this bill. Erdman (427) demonstrates the plausible corporeal connections to Milton's "Wine Press on the Rhine" (M 25:3, E121). Blake himself plainly tells us that "The Wine-Press is called War on Earth" (M 27:8, E124). Howard, on the other hand, along with noting its

corporeal function, conveys the mental (and spiritual) importance of the wine press (Blake's Milton, 160-4). In addition, I would suggest that although Blake primarily made Los and Luvah the time-sharing operators of the wine press, its image includes a threefold aspect of man--the imaginative, the passionate, and the rational.

In one instance, Blake says in Milton that "the Wine-Press of Los is eastward of Golgonooza . . . Luvah laid the foundation & Urizen finish'd it in howling woe" (27:1-2, E124). Here, though Los owns the wine press, Luvah and Urizen were its builders. And this is completely fitting--under certain circumstances imagination can certainly operate the screwhandles of the mental war built by passion and reason. In other words, although passion and reason are key opponents on the intellectual battlefield, imagination can apply enough pressure to keep the battle raging. In one sense, one is reminded of Samuel Johnson's feeling toward imagination--that like the pyramids in Rasselas, the wine presses of warfare seem "to have been erected only in compliance with that hunger of imagination which preys incessantly on life, and must be always appeased by some employment" (123). Yet in another way, as Blake would quickly point out, eternal salvation can only be gained by the pressure imagination exerts on the conflict between passion and reason. Unperverted

intellectual war operates this way, Blake would say.
Thus, imagination can be at once helpful and dangerous, a
perversion and a blessing. And the wine press of Los can
appropriately subsume the many forces in warfare,
including passion and reason.

The wine press, as Damon recognizes, also connotes
the intoxicating effects of both mental and corporeal war
(442). Hence, it is fitting that Luvah at times also
takes charge of the wine press.

The toad and venomous Newt; the Serpent clothd
in gems & gold:

They throw off their gorgeous raiment: they
rejoice with loud jubilee

Around the Wine-presses of Luvah, naked and
drunk with wine. (M 27:22-4, E124)

It is the passions that alter the consciousness of
frivolous corporeal creatures; therefore, Luvah's warfare,
mental and corporeal, is a debasement. While the Toads
and Newts and Serpents dance intoxicated in the material
fold,

in the Wine-presses the Human grapes
sing not, nor dance

They howl and writhe in shoals of torment; in
fierce flames consuming,

In chains of iron & in dungeons circled with
ceaseless fires. (M 27:30-2, E124-5)

The sons and daughters of passion are but torturers of
humanity, the helpless victims of intoxicating power
politics, the ultimate losers of perverted warfare.

To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, there is no such thing as
public opinion, only published opinion. Perhaps Blake had
had this thought when he invented the printing press as an
image for mental war. Not only is the "Wine-press . . .
call'd War on Earth," it is also "the Printing-Press / Of
Los" where "he lays his words in order above the mortal
brain / As cogs are formed in a wheel to turn the cogs of
the adverse wheel" (M 27:8-10, E124). Blake surely sees
the power of the printed word and like the wine-press, the
printing press of mental war can have adverse effects.
Los's printing press operating on earth causes man to war
on man. As Blake would write later in On Homer's Poetry
and On Virgil, it is "The Classics, it is the Classics! &
not Goths nor Monks, that Desolate Europe with Wars" and
that "Homer[,] Virgil[,] & Ovid," by glorifying war,
became "destroyers of All Art" (E270). In this manner,
then, the printing press becomes a corrupt vehicle for
transmitting glorious war to humanity. Though depicted as
an instrument of mental war overseen by imagination, the

printing press could also become a distorted device used to prolong corporeal warfare.

Finally, in Jerusalem we find one of Blake's most glaring instances of "Freudian" insight into warfare. It is possibly the most specific revelation as to the cause of mortal warfare. Namely, that repressed sexual desire is a basic cause of war. Blake observes that

The silent broodings of deadly revenge . . .

. . . fills Albion from head to foot

Seeing his Sons assimilate with Luvah, bound in
the bonds

Of Spiritual Hate, from which springs Sexual

Love as iron chains. (J 54:9-12, E203)

This later squares with a more particularized perspective:

I am drunk with unsatiated love

I must rush again to War: for the Virgin has

frownd & refusd. (J 68:62-3, E222)

In both contexts, Blake acknowledges the idea that wrath is unleashed when sexual desire has been repressed. Not only is Blake aware of the repressive aspect of the mind, but he has hit upon one of the "abnormal" manifestations of sexual repression--that of violent displacement. Freud would say an aggressive sexual act, if denied, must channel itself into the unconscious where it may

eventually resolve itself by taking up another form of behavior. In Jerusalem, Blake would say that the mental battle had been lost and that the resultant form of behavior is deviant, corporeal war.

In closing this chapter it should be noted that even before Blake wrote The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem, he had become disillusioned and quite sceptical. Yet more noticeably in the major epics, he was not simply disgusted with the material fold, but found the mental fold of existence equally dissatisfying. The mind, as mentioned, was but too closely aligned with destructive bodily instincts and, working alone, was insufficient to bring about individual or societal redemption. Consequently, in the process of shedding the mental-corporeal, Blake incorporated into his work a new dimension--the fold of spiritual warfare. What is more, as the Orc-cycle turned, Blake's new chief protagonist became the eternal prophet, Los.

IV. Spiritual War

But night or day Los follows War

(FZ VIIb:75, E362)

Spiritual War

Israel delivered from Egypt

is Art delivered from

Nature & Imitation.

(Inscription from The Laocoön, E274)

The previous discussion of Blake's wars is, in a sense, devious. It implies that Blake's mental war could be isolated as a counterpart to his spiritual war. For that matter, at times it assumes a steadfast hierarchy exists between every fold of Blake's warfare. This, however, is not the case. Looking back we are reminded that, as the term "fold" implies, there are actually no clear breaks between levels of meaning.

Also, as the evolution of the Urizen-Orc conflict demonstrates, a certain interdependence between mental and spiritual war exists, making their folds truly inseparable. That is to say, Blake realized mental wars by themselves--like those incited by early versions of Orc--were at best insufficient and at worst fatal. To be

sure, energetic mental war was necessary; but without the added balance of the spiritual fold, the "Mental Fight" could only be lost, making man's salvation unattainable. Mental war, then, in Blake's true redemptive sense, must also be considered a spiritual war.

Spiritual war is never destructive; it is creative and necessary for salvation. In this sense, spiritual war exists in a sacred "twilight zone" that distances itself from human frames of reference, while meeting head-on the challenge of explaining the unexplainable. His vehicle for describing this "zone" is his strange and elaborate mythology.

In his mythology, Blake saw fit to describe a true selfless world, reminding us that while the self still exists, humankind remains deluded:

Every Natural Effect has a Spiritual Cause,
and Not
A Natural: for a Natural Cause only seems, it is
a Delusion
Of Ulro: & ratio of the perishing Vegetable
Memory. (M 26:44-6, E124)

The spiritual cause is all, Blake would say. The "seemingly" clear corporeal and mental battles which are manifested are but fallen imitations. That is, the "Natural" sorts of wars found in Ulro, the visionless

material world, are degradations of those of the spiritual; in Blake's "inexplicable" mystical realm, however, only wars of liberated creation are waged, while on earth man's natural wars become harmful, destructive, armed conflict. In describing Blake's ethereal sphere in "The Forging of Orc," Aileen Ward remarks that

It is a Utopia predicated on change, a heaven pulsing with life, contracting and expanding, allowing for love and wrath, individuality and unity . . . [where the Eternals] wage life-giving wars "with intellectual spears, and long winged arrows of thought." (227)

Similarly, Bernard Nesfield-Cookson claims it is a visionary condition . . . in which fresh inner strength and inspiration are gathered without which the "Mental Fight" would be wanting in creative activity and imagination. [It is] the brotherhood of Eden . . . [wherein] there excels an exuberant "warfare" of ideas and creative processes. (362)

So then, where Ward, Nesfield-Cookson, and I concur is that another kind of war in fact exists for Blake, the spiritual war. What makes this warlike mode different

from the psycho-spiritual quest for complete vision is that it is a transformative state into which the redeemed may proceed. It is different also in that this warlike "mentality" excludes "questing" and is actually liberated from the mind. It is the indescribable seventh state of man that Blake, with no little success, is able to describe.

In Milton, Blake defines "pure" spiritual war: the "great Wars of Eternity" are those waged

in fury of Poetic Inspiration,
To build the Universe Stupendous: Mental forms
Creating (30:19-20, E129)

Spiritual wars, then, are those battles fought out of time and place where artistic vision rages in limitless conflict; here the wars are forever creating, never destroying. Accordingly, to discriminate what spiritual war is, Blake succinctly relates what spiritual war is not:

These are the Gods of the Kingdoms of the Earth:
in contrarious
And cruel opposition: Element against Element,
Opposed in War
Not Mental, as [are] the Wars of Eternity, but a
Corporeal Strife (M 31:23-5, E130)

Likewise, in Jerusalem Blake further explains the ideal of spiritual warfare in juxtaposition to corrupt warfare:

The wine of the Spirit & the vineyards of the
Holy-one

Here: turn into poisonous stupor & deadly
intoxication:

That they be condemnd by Law & the Lamb of God
be slain!

And the two sources of Life in Eternity[,]
Hunting and War,

Are become the Sources of dark & bitter Death &
of corroding Hell. (38:28-32, E185)

Clearly in the infinite realm, war is a life-giving pursuit--as is hunting--that the Ulro world has transformed into a vocation of death. Yet, this concept is certainly hard to comprehend; one can easily witness corporeal war, and mental war can be understood as a metaphoric elaboration of corporeal war. But understanding spiritual war is not quite so easy. So to facilitate the ability of man's corporeal self to catch glimpses of the spiritual war of inspiration, Blake designated a character in his central myth who would honestly represent the spiritual world, a character working within his visionary poetry to bridge the span

between spiritual war and mortal reader. Blake called him Los.

Los, the standing emblem of imagination in Blake's central myth, became the conveyor of spiritual war, the expresser of eternal conflicts. For that matter, Blake wisely calls Los the "Vehicular Form" (J 53:1, E202). As Damrosch explains, Los "has to work within the world . . . where the divine revelation is indeed temporal--Los is time--and is mediated 'in the Litteral expression'" (328-9). Los becomes the mental go-between to help convey spiritual war. And as such he becomes the spiritual warmaker--a builder or blacksmith, to name just two of his trades. Serving in this capacity, one often catches Los tending to his work. It is Los as Urthona whose hammer sounds "Around the Furnaces . . . to form the golden armour of science" (FZ IX:835-53, E406-7). Elsewhere in perhaps the best scene to explain Los as spiritual warmaker, Los relates a time when he took charge of his furnace and anvil, saying

I saw . . .

. . .

Every Emanative joy forbidden as a Crime:

And the Emanations buried alive in the earth

with pomp of religion:

Inspiration deny'd; Genius forbidden by laws of

punishment:

I saw terrified; I took the sighs & tears, &

bitter groans:

I lifted them into my Furnaces; to form the
spiritual sword.

That lays open the hidden heart: I drew forth
the pang

Of sorrow red hot: I worked it on my resolute
anvil. (J 9:7-20, E 152)

In this context, Los, so to speak, is fighting fire with fire. He is retaliating against the "sword of war" (9:5) and Urizenic cruelty with the "spiritual sword." What is more, those victimized, those with "sighs & tears, & bitter groans" form the the spiritual sword that Los has himself forged, establishing him as a type of savior. It is also worth noting here that the sighs, tears, and bitter groans link tightly with the short poem "I saw a Monk of Charlemaine" which prefaces Jerusalem's third chapter (52, E301-2; see also "The Grey Monk, E489). The relevant quatrain reads:

For a Tear is an Intellectual thing;
And a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King
And the bitter groan of a Martyrs woe
Is an Arrow from the Almighty's Bow! (25-8)

And the connection is fitting: As Los is spiritual blacksmith, forging the weaponry for the "Almighties[']" crusade, he becomes the poetic embodiment of spiritual war in Blake's work. Like Christ, Los is the spiritual liaison to the fallen world. In fact, in at least one brief scene they may be viewed as working in tandem to awaken the world with spiritual warfare. In the passage, Los presages the Saviour's coming, saying:

I feel my Spectre rising upon me! Albion! arouze
thyself

. . .

Thou wilt certainly provoke my Spectre against
thine in fury!

He has a Sepulcher hewn out of a Rock ready for
thee:

And a Death of Eight thousand years forg'd by
thyself, upon

The point of his Spear! (J 33:2-8, E179)

Instantaneously, however, Los rejoins the "Divine Body" (33:11), and immediately following, the Savior steps forward to confront humanity too,

Saying. Albion! Our Wars are wars of life, &
wounds of love,

With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows
of thought:

Mutual in one anothers love and wrath all
renewing

We live as One Man. (J 34:14-17, E180)

So then, in these brief mythical episodes Blake makes important claims about Los. Namely, that the figure called Los is truly an Eternal Emissary working in the name of spiritual war. Los becomes an active player in war--as once Urizen and Orc both were--but Los's battlefields are on spiritual grounds. Blake furthermore says that Los is Christ is the Divine Family, and as such, they are special warriors. And aside from illuminating his concept of brotherhood, Blake believes they fight wars of renewal as treatment for "the fever of the human soul" (J 34:9, E179), the sickness of mortal combat.

Finally, Blake was convinced that Los's spiritual war was not fought in vain. The major prophecies foretell of a coming together whereby the selfhood is no longer divided from the universe, the Zoas have arisen together "into Albion's Bosom" (J 96:41-2, E256), and the name for the Emanations has collectively become Jerusalem. What is more, in Blake's vision of dynamic eternity, Los's weapons--the bow and the arrow--are still not idle. They find their mark, "laying / Open the hidden Heart in Wars of mutual Benevolence[,] Wars of Love" (J 97:13-14, E256).

V. Conclusion

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of Desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire! (M 1:9-12, E95)

In an effort to resolve Blake's paradoxical views on war, I have attempted to demonstrate that warfare indeed meant much to Blake as an artist and a person. Through his work it is clearly evident that he put his life into revolution. And in this sense, he was just as Murry called him--"a great Communist" (316). Blake certainly believed the brotherhood of mankind was a justifiable ideal. At the same time, though, he was not a socialist; Blake learned early that bloodshed was never justified in establishing a new society. Forcing one's will upon a people by the use of arms would be tyrannical Urizenism. As Blake knew, Corporeal war was hell. Again, Murry said it best:

[Blake] would never have believed
that it was possible to annihilate the
Selfhood by the Selfhood. You cannot
bring a selfless society into being by
exciting anger or hatred, or bidding

men to follow their naked interests.

(316)

And though at times it seems that Blake wants to have warfare both ways--as a pacifist and a revolutionary--we are reminded that while Blake condoned revolution, he did not believe that it should be thrust upon a people at any and all costs. In fact, his revolution could only be brought about by a mental fight, using peaceful but piercing "Arrows of intellect" (J 98:7, E257). In addition, having described the noble intellectual battles required for redemption, Blake envisioned yet a further visionary realm of warfare which resulted from the mental fight: spiritual war. Here he saw Utopian battles of inspiration waged at complete liberty. Here the eternal wars were dynamic, life-giving battles of imagination.

While discussing the politics of Blake's writings, Mark Schorer said that "wars may be described as the clash of mythologies" (28). Though the context of this statement was mostly political, Blake would not hesitate to agree. He constructed a mythology that not only attempted to describe humankind's psychology and spirituality, but also intended to shake the world out of its deathlike stupor. He deliberately wrote his poetry to "clash" with the mythologies of his day. Interestingly

enough, in so doing, Blake developed fluctuating meanings that frequently clashed with themselves as well.

Having said that, it should be recognized that what Blake had done was create wars within wars within wars. Unfortunately, while Blake was poised for mental war, there were very few spiritual friends to take him on. He had planned a war, invited the world, yet no one came to battle. That is, no one arrived on time. Today there are many more who engage William Blake in his warfare of meanings.

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